United Nations A/AC.109/2004/SR.4

General Assembly

Distr.: General
14 June 2005
English
Original: Russian

Special Committee on the situation with regard to the implementation of the Declaration on the granting of independence to colonial countries and peoples

Summary record of the fourth meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Tuesday, 8 June 2004, at 10 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. Aisi ..... (Papua New Guinea)

Contents

Adoption of the agenda

Requests for hearing

Question of Gibraltar
Hearing of representative of the territory
Hearing of petitioner

Questions of American Samoa, Anguilla, Bermuda, the British Virgin Islands, the Cayman Islands, Guam, Montserrat, Pitcairn, Saint Helena, Tokelau, the Turks and Caicos Islands and the United States Virgin Islands
Hearing of representative of a territory

This record is subject to correction. Corrections should be submitted in one of the working languages. They should be set forth in a memorandum and also incorporated in a copy of the record. They should be sent *within one week of the date of this document* to the Chief, Official Records Editing Section, room DC2-750, 2 United Nations Plaza.

Any corrections to the record of this meeting and of other meetings will be issued in a corrigendum.

04-37932 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 10.20 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

1. *The agenda was adopted.*

Requests for hearing (aide-memoire 9/04)

2. **The Chairman** drew attention to the item entitled "Special Committee's decision of 9 June 2003 concerning Puerto Rico" and reminded members that the Committee had held an annual discussion on that item, including hearing of interested organizations. The Special Committee had, to date, received 23 requests for hearing from organizations. He suggested that the petitioners be heard on the basis of the Committee's usual practice.

3. *It was so decided.*

4. **The Chairman** drew attention to aide-memoire 9/04 containing a number of requests for hearing in connection with the item. In the absence of objections, he would take it that the Special Committee agreed to accede to those requests.

5. *It was so decided.*

Question of Gibraltar (A/AC.109/2004/7)

6. **The Chairman** said that the delegation of Spain had expressed a wish to participate in the Committee's deliberations on the item. In the absence of any objection, he proposed to comply with that request.

7. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Oyazun (Spain) took a place at the Committee table.*

8. **Mr. Oyazun** (Spain) said that Spain continued to take great interest in United Nations deliberations on the question of progress in the process of decolonisation. Much remained to be done in that connection, since 16 territories still appeared on the Committee's list. Their different colonial situations prevented the adoption of a unified approach to the problem. The situation of Gibraltar, for one, had special characteristics of its own.

9. Gibraltar formed the subject of a dispute on sovereignty between two States - the United Kingdom, which was the Administering Power, and Spain, which claimed sovereignty over the territory. Spain would never drop its claim, which extended not only to the Rock, transferred to the United Kingdom under article 10 of the Treaty of Utrecht, but also to the isthmus, whose illegal occupation by the United Kingdom Spain had never recognized. The United Nations doctrine concerning the Gibraltar issue was contained in several General Assembly resolutions. First of all, resolution 2429 (XXIII) of 18 December 1968 described the colonial presence in Gibraltar as contrary to the Charter of the United Nations and urged the United Kingdom to bring to an end the territory's colonial status. Second, the decolonisation of Gibraltar was to be effected in accordance with the principle of territorial integrity and not with that of self-determination; in that connection, he recalled paragraph 6 of resolution 1514 (XV) of 14 December 1960, according to which any attempt aimed at the partial or total disruption of the national unity and territorial integrity of a country was incompatible with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations. Third and last, he referred to resolution 2353 (XXII) of 19 December 1967, according to which the colonial situation in Gibraltar disrupted the national unity and territorial integrity of Spain.

10. Every year, the General Assembly adopted by consensus a Decision providing, inter alia, for the establishment of a negotiating process with a view to resolving all differences over Gibraltar and for discussions on issues of sovereignty within the framework of that process. In line with that mandate, the Governments of the two States, in a joint communique issued in Brussels in 1984, had agreed to launch a negotiating process and to discuss issues of sovereignty and mutual benefit. On 10 May 2004, the Spanish Minister of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation, speaking before the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Congress of Deputies, had stated that the Spanish Government was firmly committed to the revival and reactivation of the dialogue and negotiations within the context of the Brussels Process. On 20 May 2004 he had travelled to London for a meeting with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office Secretary to discuss various international, European and bilateral issues, including the question of Gibraltar.

11. Concluding his remarks, he noted with satisfaction the holding some weeks earlier of an important decolonisation seminar at Madang (Papua New Guinea), which had resulted in the adoption by consensus of a report reflecting the work of previous seminars and confirming the view expressed in

paragraph 6 of General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV).

12. Only five years remained until the conclusion of the Second International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism. The only way of making progress in the question of Gibraltar was to act with imagination towards a global solution that would be acceptable to the United Kingdom and Spain and would guarantee a flourishing future for Gibraltar.

Hearing of representative of the territory

13. **The Chairman** drew attention to the working paper prepared by the Secretariat in document A/AC.109/2004/7 and informed members that a request to address the Committee had been received from the Chief Minister of Gibraltar. In accordance with standing procedure and in the absence of any objection, he suggested that the Committee should comply with that request.

14. *It was so decided.*

15. **Mr. Caruana** (Chief Minister of Gibraltar) said that the Leader of the Gibraltar Labour Party, which was a political rival to his own party, had come to accompany him in order to demonstrate the unity existing in Gibraltar on issues of self-determination.

16. At the recent Pacific Regional seminar, the present Chairman of the Special Committee had said that it was the Committee's role to assist the peoples of non-self-governing territories in determining their political future without external interference, and that it was incumbent upon the Committee to take action towards that end. The people of Gibraltar wholeheartedly endorsed those views. Yet although representatives from Gibraltar attended the Committee's sessions year by year in order to seek assistance and action, the Committee did not, in fact, engage in any action on the question of Gibraltar and even failed to reflect those representative's views and statements in its annual resolutions.

17. At the Madang seminar, the Chairman had also said that he looked forward to the constructive participation of the peoples of the non-self-governing territories. The people of the listed territory of Gibraltar could not do more than they were already doing in that respect. Every year the Government, and of late also the Opposition, appealed to the Fourth Committee and the Special Committee for involvement, visit and support. The people of Gibraltar had urged the Special Committee to recommend the referral of the disputed legal issues to the International Court of Justice for an advisory opinion; to uphold its right to self-determination; and to declare its right to participate fully and directly in talks about Gibraltar's future. It had submitted arguments that were, in its view, unanswerable in international law in support of its own position and in opposition to that of Spain. Yet no response had been forthcoming and no action had been taken. Year by year, the Special Committee confined itself to adopting the same old resolution, which entirely ignored the rights, aspirations and position of the only party the Committee was called upon to protect – the colonial people of the non-self-governing territory of Gibraltar.

18. The Committee had frequently and consistently declared that in the process of decolonisation there was no alternative to the principle of self-determination. Unlike the Political Committee of the General Assembly, it was not called upon to deal with disputes concerning sovereignty: it was mandated to advance the decolonisation of the remaining listed territories.

19. One of the problems obstructing a settlement of the question of Gibraltar was Spain's insistence on tying the issue of decolonisation to its anachronistic claim to sovereignty over the territory. Spain's argument that its sovereignty claim cancelled out the self-determination rights of a colonial people had no foundation in international law or United Nations doctrine. The two issues were entirely separate. Whatever the merits of Spain's sovereignty claim – and his Government believed them to be non-existent – it could not override a colonial people's right to self-determination.

20. One of the first steps the Committee could take on the question of Gibraltar would be to reassess the contents of its annual resolution. The problem could be summed up as follows: did the Committee see itself as the guardian and promoter of the political rights of the colonial people of a listed non-self-governing territory or as the referee in a sovereignty dispute between that territory's Administering Power and a neighbouring country?

21. Reiterating his Government's request for the referral of the Gibraltar case to the International Court of Justice for an advisory opinion, he remarked that Spain itself argued that its position was based on

international law. The International Court alone could issue an authoritative opinion as to whether or not that position was consistent with international law. It was intolerable that the people of Gibraltar should be prevented from exercising its rights if those rights were recognized by the International Court. If Spain was so sure of the correctness of the legal principles it was invoking, why was it not willing to refer the matter to the International Court of Justice?

22. It should be recalled that the Parliament and people of Gibraltar had petitioned the Special Committee to visit the territory in order to assess its economic, political and cultural realities and to assure itself that the distinct and separate identity of the people of Gibraltar entitled it to enjoy and exercise the right to self-determination. The people of Gibraltar did not understand why the Committee did not wish to acquaint itself with the true facts before adopting its judgments and decisions on the question of Gibraltar. The Administering Power had no objection to the visit, taking the view that the decision was up to the Special Committee itself. Gibraltar had even offered to pay the expenses of the visit.

23. Spain, of course, objected because it knew that clarity and transparency would be fatal to its case. Arguing that such a visit would run counter to the principle of territorial integrity traditionally upheld by the General Assembly in accordance with international law, it also insisted that the sending of a visiting mission in cases where a sovereignty dispute existed required the consent not only of the Administering Power but also of the other party to the dispute. In invoking non-existent United Nations doctrine, Spain sought to confuse two separate issues, that of decolonization and that of sovereignty. Its position was neither logical nor coherent. Spain did not oppose the decolonisation of Gibraltar, but it considered that the way to achieve it lay in the principle of territorial integrity, not in that of self-determination. At the same time, it objected to determining what principles of international law were applicable to the case in point, and for that reason blocked the proposal to refer the case to the International Court.

24. The people of Gibraltar had also repeatedly requested the Special Committee in its annual resolution on the question of that territory, to stop calling for the continuance of bilateral negotiations between the Administering Power and the country claiming sovereignty with a view to settling their differences. Whether intentionally or not, the call reduced the issue to a sovereignty dispute between two Member States, as though the people of Gibraltar had no political rights of its own, and thus amounted to a betrayal of its right to self-determination.

25. As the United Kingdom Government had made clear in June 2003, the chances of an agreement on the future of Gibraltar that was not accepted by the people of the territory were nil. What then was the point of pursuing a bilateral dialogue? In response to the United Kingdom Government's statement, the Government of Spain had announced that the negotiations had reached an advanced stage. Thus the bilateral negotiating process not only infringed the right to self-determination of the people of Gibraltar but was also a complete sham, being ineffective and – in the opinion of the United Kingdom itself – incapable of producing results. Once again, he called upon the Committee to abandon the role of a neutral observer in the sovereignty dispute between the United Kingdom and Spain.

26. Gibraltar would never agree to take part in a bilateral dialogue between the Administering Power and the party claiming sovereignty. Such a structure intrinsically violated the rights of the people of Gibraltar as a separate people. Nor would the people of Gibraltar take part in a political dialogue in which the United Kingdom and Spain could strike political deals about its rights and future behind its back and without its consent. It was willing to engage in dialogue with Spain, but it regarded the principle of consent and its right to decide its own future as paramount. The dialogue had to be conducted on the basis of an open agenda. Gibraltar had to be able to participate fully, properly and safely. Most important of all, the outcome must not be predetermined. That meant that the purpose of the dialogue must not be to negotiate the total or partial transfer of sovereignty to Spain against the wishes of the people of Gibraltar.

27. To sum up, the Committee was requested to take the following action: to send a visiting mission to Gibraltar; to recommend to the Fourth Committee, in view of the existing disagreement between the parties as to the applicable international law, to refer the case to the International Court of Justice for an advisory opinion; and to amend the wording of its resolution on the question of Gibraltar so as to reflect the call made by the Government of that territory on behalf of its

people for full, adequate and safe participation in any negotiations on the question.

28. Certain developments, of which the Committee should be informed, had taken place in the case. In the past weeks Spain had been disrupting Gibraltar's tourist trade by banning from its ports any cruise ships that sailed from Gibraltar. The ban had since been lifted, but only for a period of three months, which was not enough. He urged Spain to declare the lifting of the ban to be indefinite, thus bringing its conduct into line with its statement at the recent Pacific seminar to the effect that Spain was committed to ensuring a secure, stable and prosperous future for Gibraltar.

29. The Commission of the European Union had recently adopted a ruling the effect of which – if it were allowed to stand – was that Gibraltar would henceforth be treated as a region of the Administering Power (the United Kingdom) and would be subject to the same taxation system and taxation rates as that country. Such a situation would gravely undermine the viability of Gibraltar's economy and its society as a whole, and the ruling was therefore going to be challenged before the European Court of Justice by the Governments of both the United Kingdom and Gibraltar. He wished to report the ruling to the Committee because, apart from other legal deficiencies, it was incompatible with the Charter of the United Nations. According to General Assembly resolution 2625 (XXV) of 24 October 1970, under the Charter the territory of a colony or other non-self-governing territory had a status separate and distinct from the territory of the State administering it. To seek to treat a colony as a region of its Administering Power was therefore inconsistent with the Charter.

30. The current year marked the tercentenary of British sovereignty over Gibraltar and of Gibraltar's development as a people and a community. The time had come to take Gibraltar to a new level of political development towards the greatest possible measure of self-government. To that end, Gibraltar had in December 2003 tabled certain constitutional reform and modernisation proposals to the United Kingdom. Formal discussions on those proposals were to begin in the autumn of 2004. Later in the current week, Gibraltar was to participate for the first time in elections to the European Parliament. In order to obtain the right to do so it had been obliged to bring and win a case before the European Court of Human Courts. There could be no doubt that the people of Gibraltar would massively exercise their right to vote.

31. **Mr. Requeijo-Gual** (Cuba) asked in what capacity the inhabitants of Gibraltar were going to participate in the forthcoming election to the European Parliament and for what country they were going to elect deputies.

32. **Mr. Caruana** (Chief Minister of Gibraltar) said that Gibraltar had won the right to participate in the elections by bringing a case before the European Court of Human Rights on the ground of Annex II to the European Convention on Human Rights, which provided that elections to legislative organs had to be conducted by universal suffrage. To deprive the 30 000 inhabitants of Gibraltar, which formed part of the European Union, of the right to vote in the election would constitute a violation of that principle.

33. As for the second question raised by the representative of Cuba, the point at issue was not that the people of Gibraltar appeared on the electoral rolls of the United Kingdom but that Gibraltar and its inhabitants belonged to a unified regional constituency, the European Union having adopted a system of regional electoral rolls. The United Kingdom, which was allocated a fixed number of seats in the European Parliament, was reluctant to forgo one of its seats in order to allow the territory to be represented separately. If that were to happen, Gibraltar with its 30 000 inhabitants would have one seat in the European Parliament while the 7 million inhabitants of, say, the south-western region of the United Kingdom had five, a situation that would be inconsistent with the principle of proportional representation.

Hearing of a petitioner:

34. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Bossano, Leader of the Opposition in the Parliament of Gibraltar, took a place at the petitioners' table.*

35. **Mr. Bossano** (Leader of the Opposition in the Parliament of Gibraltar) recalled that it was forty years since the elected representatives of his people had told the Committee that the new constitution coming into force in 1964 would be the final step before the full decolonisation of Gibraltar. On that occasion, the Committee had agreed that the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples was fully applicable to the territory and the

people of Gibraltar, adding, however, that since a dispute existed between the United Kingdom and Spain, those two States ought to meet in order to settle their differences. It was as a result of that recommendation that Gibraltar was still a colony, Spain having immediately made use of it in order to declare that neither self-determination nor the options for decolonisation set forth in General Assembly resolution 1541 (XV) of 15 December 1960 were applicable to Gibraltar. In his view, the Committee was not empowered to decide to which of the sixteen territories on its list the right to self-determination was or was not applicable.

36. The people of Gibraltar itself had never doubted its identity as a colonial people entitled to respect of its rights under the Charter and to protection by the United Nations. Regrettably, the United Nations had, for the past 40 years, chosen to pander to Spain's views. Thus, for example, the General Assembly by its resolution 2070 (XX) of 16 December 1965 had invited the United Kingdom and Spain to begin without delay the negotiations envisaged by the Special Committee. In 1966 Spain had made proposals for Gibraltar's decolonisation based on a special fiscal regime, United Kingdom nationality for Gibraltarians and the continuance of a United Kingdom military presence in the territory in exchange for the transfer of sovereignty to Spain. In 1967 those proposals had been rejected in a referendum led by the United Kingdom.

37. The Special Committee's refusal to endorse the outcome of the referendum had enabled Spain to argue that it was the Committee doctrine, endorsed by the Fourth Committee and the General Assembly, that the people of Gibraltar could not freely and democratically determine the future of its country. Much of the blame for the situation in which Gibraltar now found itself thus lay with the Committee's past membership. In the question of Gibraltar the Committee had acted as if its role were to perpetuate rather than to eradicate colonialism.

38. The preamble to the new Constitution of Gibraltar, adopted in 1969, gave Gibraltarians the right of veto over any change in sovereignty as well as a significant degree of self-government. Since then, Spain's opposition to any further constitutional advance had meant that the United Kingdom had failed to honour its obligation under the Charter to promote the people of Gibraltar's attainment of the greatest possible level of self-government.

39. In 1984 the United Kingdom had abandoned its traditional position by agreeing to discuss sovereignty as two separate issues. In 1985 it had submitted, together with Spain, a decision to the Fourth Committee accepting the Brussels negotiating process as the forum for settling the issue of decolonisation.

40. Noting that at the present meeting the Spanish representative had again mentioned two sovereignty claims, one relating to the Rock itself and the other to the isthmus, he said that Gibraltar rejected that approach because it regarded Gibraltar as a single territory belonging to its people alone.

41. The Committee still continued to support the Brussels negotiating process although the colonial people of Gibraltar had clearly demonstrated that it would not permit the existing Administering Power and the aspiring colonial Power to barter Gibraltar's future between them. In November 2002 it had once more overwhelmingly rejected any possible sovereignty-sharing deal between the United Kingdom and Spain. The Committee should be guided by the words of the Secretary-General, who in January 2003 had enjoined it to work towards the exercise of a full measure of self-government by the 16 listed territories on the basis of one of the options envisaged in the Declaration on Decolonisation, the choice of option being determined by the freely expressed wishes of the territorial people.

42. A territorial claim by a neighbouring State could not deprive a colonial people of the inalienable and universal right to self-determination. At the recent Pacific Region seminar the Secretary-General had spoken of the need to assist the 16 listed territories by devising strategies in support of their political, economic and social advancement in their quest for self-determination.

43. Following the referendum of 2002, the United Kingdom Government had, for the present, abandoned the attempt to introduce shared sovereignty over Gibraltar. The Spanish Government, for its part, hoped to be able to re-launch the Brussels negotiations. As for the Gibraltarians themselves, they objected to that idea and were determined to block the negotiating process, as they had succeeded in doing in 2001. He appealed to the Socialist Governments of both Spain and the United Kingdom to recognize the existence of the people of Gibraltar as a distinct colonial people, to which the Charter and the Declaration on Decolonisation were fully applicable.

44. Gibraltar could not be decolonised unless and until it exercised its inalienable right to self-determination using the options provided by the United Nations. The Chairman and members of the Committee should remain true to the Charter by siding with the colonial people instead of defending the interests of the United Kingdom and Spain.

45. In conclusion, he recalled that the Pacific Region seminar had recognized that visiting United Nations missions to the territories were the key to the process of decolonisation. The Parliament of Gibraltar has been inviting the Committee to send such a mission ever since 1964. Why had the Committee never accepted the invitation?

46. *Mr. Bossano (Leader of the Opposition in the Parliament of Gibraltar) withdrew.*

47. **The Chairman** suggested that the Committee should continue the consideration of the question of Gibraltar at its next session, subject to any directives the General Assembly might issue at its fifty-ninth session and that in order to facilitate the consideration of the item in the Fourth Committee, all relevant documentation should be transmitted to the fifty-ninth session of the General Assembly.

48. *It was so decided.*

49. **The Chairman** announced that the Committee had thus completed the consideration of the item.

Question of American Samoa, Anguilla, Bermuda, the British Virgin Islands, the Cayman Islands, Guam, Montserrat, Pitcairn, Saint Helena, Tokelau, the Turks and Caicos Islands and the United States Virgin Islands (A/AC.109/2004/2, 3, 5, 6, 8-10 and 13-17)

Hearing of a representative of a territory

50. **The Chairman** informed the Committee that he had received a request from Dr. Carlyle Corbin, representing the Government of the United States Virgin Islands, to make a statement on the item. Subject to members' consent and in accordance with standing procedure, he suggested that Committee should comply with that request.

51. *It was so decided.*

Dr.Corbin (Government of the United States Virgin Islands) took a place at the Committee table.

52. **Dr. Corbin** (Government of the United States Virgin Islands) commended the quality of the regional seminar held in Papua New Guinea, whose findings would be of great help in updating the resolution to be adopted by the Committee later in the session. The Special Committee deserved to be congratulated on reforming itself, especially during the past decade, in the light of the challenges of the post-Cold War period.

53. Attention now neeed to be focused on the implementation of the actions called for in the General Assembly's resolutions on decolonisation issues. As pointed out in resolution A/58/108 of 5 December 2003, political education programmes designed to foster awareness of the right to self-determination in conformity with the legitimate political status options based on the principles clearly defined in General Assembly resolution 1541 (XV) constituted a critical element of the decolonisation process. That was one of the General Assembly's long-standing and fundamental mandates, but difficulties still lay in the path of its implementation, and many people in the smaller territories still remained unaware of their legitimate options. Sufficient support was not forthcoming and the Governments of small territories were often obliged to finance such activities from limited local resources. Thus, the Government of which he was a member had found itself unable to fund a new political education programme.

54. The Special Committee ought to involve the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in facilitating activities in the territories aimed at enhancing awareness of the legitimate political options available. The Organization should draw upon its experience with political education in the former Trust Territories in the 1980s, in which the United Nations Electoral Unit had played an important role. The Committee would also do well to institute an information exchange with the Human Rights Committee and other United Nations bodies dealing with similar issues. Without such coordination, the Committee's efforts to fulfil its mandate of promoting political and constitutional development in the territories would remain incomplete.

55. The concept of legitimacy of political status was closely associated with the question of political education. General Assembly resolution 1541 (XV) set out the criteria for determining whether or not a non-self-governing territory had achieved full self-government. According to the resolution, the options

constituting absolute political equality included (a) emergence as a sovereign independent State, (b) free association with an independent State and (c) integration with an independent State. The minimum standards of political equality provided under those options remained the basis for defining self-government in the 21st century. Those standards were sufficiently flexible to accommodate a variety of self-governing arrangements. An objective analysis of whether any given territorial arrangement met those standards would reveal whether or not a territory was fully self-governing. Removal from the United Nations list of non-self-governing territories should not be a goal in itself, and the success of the Committee's work should not be judged solely by how many, and how quickly, territories were de-listed.

56. An interesting issue that had emerged towards the end of the preceding decade was whether acceptance of political and constitutional dependency by the people of a territory really corresponded to self-government. Not only the people but, in many cases, its leaders were unaware of the self-determination options available. The need for an expert inquiry into whether the existing political status of a given territory met the minimum standards of self-government thus acquired critical importance.

57. In order to assess the effectiveness of the decolonisation resolutions, the General Assembly had requested the Secretary-General to report on their implementation since the declaration of the Second International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism. Similar reports in the past had failed to achieve the desired effect. Serious analysis of the kind called for in the Plan of Action for the International Decade continued to be lacking. Regrettably, expectations raised among the peoples of the territories were often dashed because of the inaction of the United Nations machinery, creating doubts as to the very relevance of the United Nations to the territories' political development. In the past, failure to implement the resolutions had often been blamed on the uncooperative attitude of Administering Powers. That might be true in some areas, such as that of permitting visits by missions. But the Administering Powers could not be blamed for failures to do what the United Nations was perfectly capable of doing under its own mandate.

58. The period following the 2003 decolonisation seminar in Anguilla was an example of how inaction could produce disillusionment. Many territorial Heads of Government attending the seminar heard for the first time of the existence of options other than continuing dependence or immediate independence. Many of them had expressed a particular interest in, and had asked for additional information on, the option of free association. But in the absence of any follow-up the interest had dissipated and the question as to whether such options were indeed available to the territories remained unanswered.

59. In conclusion, he suggested that the General Assembly should undertake a mid-term review of the implementation of the Plan of Action for the Second International Decade. The review could take the form of a special session of the General Assembly, but it should not on any account replace the regional seminar for 2005.

60. **Mr. Richardson** (Saint Kitts and Nevis), recalling that the three self-determination options defined at the 2003 seminar were independence, free association and integration, requested the representative of the territory to explain the precise contents of those options. Secondly, it had been reported in some regional mass media that the Administering Power had no intention of offering the free association option to territories under its administration. He would appreciate the representative's comments on that point.

61. **Dr. Corbin** (Government of the United States Virgin Islands) said that the options referred to were minimum acceptable standards. The general parameters for self-determination were set out in General Assembly resolution 1541 (XV). There existed many different ways of attaining those standards. As for the second question relating to reports appearing in certain mass media, he believed that some confusion had arisen in the absence of a sufficiently active information campaign following the Anguilla seminar.

62. **Mr. Tanoh-Boutchoué** (Cote d'Ivoire) asked whether any organizations or departments responsible for informing the population about available self-determination options existed in the non-self-governing territories of the Caribbean region. Were any such structures operating at the level of the region as a whole?

63. **Dr. Corbin** (Government of the United States Virgin Islands) said that the degree of information on the subject of self-determination varied widely from

one part of the region to another. In Puerto Rico, for instance, where not only political parties but also non-governmental organizations were engaged in raising people's awareness, the level of information on existing options, their definitions and their possible consequences was very high. In the smaller Caribbean territories, the main work of informing the population was left to the political parties, each of which favoured some particular self-determination option. Although experts, scientists and teachers were also called upon to play a certain role in providing political education, the main burden fell upon administrative structures, whose resources for the purpose were not always adequate. A certain amount of cooperation was obtained in some cases from the Administering Power, e.g. the United Kingdom, as well as from United Nations agencies such as UNDP.

64. Regrettably, a great deal of information on United Nations efforts in the area of decolonisation failed to reach the people of the non-self-governing territories owing to lack of resources for dissemination programmes. United Nations Information Offices never serviced the small territories, being mandated to operate only in independent States. The recently created United Nations website was very helpful in disseminating information on decolonisation, and it was to be hoped that the data it provided would be constantly updated and expanded.

65. **Mr. Ovia** (Papua New Guinea), inquiring about the level of political awareness of the people of the United States Virgin Islands, said that informing the peoples of non-self-governing territories about the self-determination options available to them was a duty not only for the Organization but also for Administering Powers and territorial administrations.

66. **Dr. Corbin** (Government of the United States Virgin Islands) recalled that an active campaign to inform the population on available self-determination options had taken place between 1988 and 1993 in connection with preparations for a referendum on the subject. The campaign had been funded entirely from local resources. The territory's administration had repeatedly requested the Committee for methodological assistance and information, in particular concerning the applicability to the United States Virgin Islands of General Assembly resolution 1541 (XV), as well as for recommendations as to the composition of the electorate, but no answer had been received. Neither had the Special Committee complied with the request for a visiting mission to the islands for the purpose of observing the referendum.

67. The territorial administration had also requested the Administering Power to provide it with the resources needed to keep the population effectively informed, but no such resources had been forthcoming. The results of the referendum had been declared invalid because an insufficient number of the island's inhabitants had participated. The reason was not lack of interest on the part of the people but the influence of certain forces within the territory, which regarded the process as improper. Nevertheless, notwithstanding all obstacles, the territorial administration had fulfilled and was continuing to fulfil its obligations in terms of political education of the people. While no large-scale information campaigns had been undertaken since the referendum, his Government was devoting considerable attention to advancing towards self-determination through the territory's active participation in regional integration structures. Recalling that many General Assembly resolutions called for political education programmes to be organized by the United Nations in cooperation with Administering Powers and territorial administrations, he said that his Government was prepared to engage in such cooperation but saw no sign of the two other partners' willingness to participate in the exercise.

68. **Mr. Gandarillas** (Bolivia) said that he shared the concern expressed by the representative of the territory over the failure of the United Nations to take the necessary steps towards the early implementation of the Plan of Action although so little time remained until the completion of the Second Decade. What steps did Dr. Corbin think should be taken to remove the obstacles to the implementation of the Plan of Action and various resolutions in the remaining five years of the Decade in order to enable the Committee and the territory to achieve the goals of the United Nations in the decolonisation sphere? Time was moving forward inexorably. It was essential that the Committee, the Administering Powers and the colonial peoples themselves undertake the necessary efforts and that more specific measures be taken in the light of the seminars' results.

69. **Dr. Corbin** (Government of the United States Virgin Islands) said that the questions asked by the previous speaker would be more appropriately addressed to those required to take the specific measures referred to. The present Plan of Action was

analogous to that for the first Decade, and practical activities were not its main element. The Plan indicated measures to be taken by the Administering Powers, the Special Committee and the United Nations system. In that connection it was necessary to evaluate the work done by the United Nations system, and in particular to see how the specialized agencies had reacted to the call for assistance addressed to them. UNDP was, of course, in the habit of submitting comprehensive reports to the Committee. It would be interesting to know what other specialized organs of the United Nations were doing by way of assistance to the territories. As for the Committee itself, it had been requested to analyse the situation in the field, to elucidate the nature of the increasingly complex developments taking place in the territories and to determine what kind of recommendations might be made as regards the territories' attainment of self-government. No information was available on those points.

70. At the Papua New Guinea seminar, as at preceding ones, a territory had asked to be removed from the list of non-self-governing territories having no very clear idea of what constituted self-government. The goal should not be the removal of any given territories from the list but their attainment of full self-government. Those aspects should be specifically reflected in the resolutions and plans of action. The point at issue was to improve the machinery for practical action that would enable the Committee to obtain the information it needed for decision-making. Answers had yet to be found to many questions, including that of the nature of processes taking place in the territories and of what the Committee could do to assist them. Efforts must also be made in connection with the preparation of reference materials. Paradoxically enough, one of the best reference documents prepared by the Committee was devoted to Puerto Rico, a territory not officially on the list. As already pointed out, little time remained until the end of the Second Decade. The Committee must accelerate its work if it meant to attain the goals set by the General Assembly.

71. **The Chairman** remarked that no member of the Committee proposed the removal of any given territory from the list of non-self-governing territories on grounds of expediency. All were aware of their responsibilities in accordance with the mandate, and any removal from the list had to be effected on the basis of the appropriate procedure.

The meeting rose at 12.20 p.m.